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The Southern Frontier

We dedicate ourselves to the task of doing the most and the best that can be done here and now.

VOL. V DECEMBER, 1944 NO. 12

Report of The Council Meeting

Resolutions

1. General Resolutions

We believe that every effort must be made to prepare the people of the South for the returning Negro and white soldiers. The problems which are arising already as they come back from active service or are demobilized into civilian life, call for prompt and constructive action on local, state, regional and national levels.

With a view to encouraging the returning Negro soldiers to have faith that the democratic principles for which they have fought are to be translated into reality, we recommend:

1. Employment of all persons on the basis of ability, with due regard for seniority rights.
2. Abolition of the white primary where it exists.
3. Extension of the growing practice of employing Negro policemen and firemen in Southern cities and equal treatment of members of both races by the police and the courts.
4. Equalization of educational opportunity and of pay for teachers of both races.
5. Extension of publicly financed low cost housing.
6. Increased publicly financed medical and dental care available to both races on an equal basis.
7. That equal accommodations for Negroes as provided under the law, be actually provided on all public transportation facilities, and that discriminatory practices now common in travel be abolished.

2. Post War Employment

The Southern Regional Council realizes the importance of encouraging and planning for an effective program of full employment in every Southern community.

We, therefore, urge that such planning include the initiation and maintenance of an effective public employment service which within its ranks and among employers will promote the effective utilization of all workers in terms of their skills and training, without regard to their race, color or creed.

We recommend that equal and effective opportunities for the technical and vocational training of Negroes be made available.

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President Odum's Address

It is a privilege to call to order this our first annual meeting of the Southern Regional Council, to recapture something of the heritage and spirit back of its founding, and to look forward to the action which the Council will recommend today and perhaps to hazard what tomorrow and all the days after tomorrow will bring forth. It seems appropriate to look briefly at our Council's first year from three levels.

Our first feeling is one of gratification that we have in the South an actual Southern Regional Council, organized, chartered, and a growing concern devoted to the high purpose of developing, conserving and using wisely the great resources of the South, particularly the human resources, and of so integrating the South into the total fabric of the United States as to achieve a better approximation to the regional quality and balance of America which may be the most important and critical domestic task of post-war planning that will face us. Less than a year ago we gathered together in solemn assembly, conscious of a great heritage and a great opportunity, and we covenanted together to devote ourselves unswervingly to the specific task of doing the most and the best that could be done with reference to one aspect of our post-war problem, namely race relations and development with particular reference to the South's part in assuring the Negro an equitable part in all our democratic processes.

We agreed for the first task to focus our interest and efforts upon this field for several reasons. In the first place, it seems universally agreed that in the total modern world and particularly in America at this time, the problem of race and minority people constitutes one of the most important, maybe the most important, point of tension. Still more specifically in the South it is our *Number One* problem and we recognized that every phase of southern economy and culture is inseparably related to the total life and culture of the Negro and that there is scarcely any aspect of Negro life that in turn is not closely related to the total life and culture of the South. Still more specifically we recognized the impending crisis that might soon face us in the dilemmas of our returning soldiers and the South's responsibility and opportunity here. And still

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Program for 1945

The first annual member meeting of the Southern Regional Council was held in the Exhibition Galleries of Atlanta University on December 6, 1944. This meeting was preceded by meetings of the Executive, Program, Fellowship and Membership Committees at the SRC offices on December 5. It was followed by a meeting of the Board of Directors.

The Executive Directors, in their reports offered several suggestions and recommendations on the program of the Council during the coming year. The procedures authorized were:

1. *The Organization of State Divisions of the Council.* As soon as there are one hundred members of the Council in a given state, they will be organized as a nucleus for action on the state level. The by-laws and policies of such divisions would, of course, have to be in harmony with those of the Council.

2. *A Series of South-wide Conferences.* Within the limits of the budget and with the advice of the Executive Committee, the SRC will sponsor several important annual conferences. One would be a conference for the leaders of the state and local interracial committees. Another would be a strategy conference of the leaders of the major agencies working on problems of the South within the framework of the Council's interests. Still another would be a conference of religious leaders in programs of social action, with particular emphasis, perhaps, on the women's divisions of the various church bodies.

3. *A Series of State-wide Race Relations Institutes or Forums.* Each of these would run from three to five days and would attempt to reach a better cross-section of the public than is usually reached by such meetings. The Department of Race Relations of the American Missionary Association is preparing to promote a series of institutes and has asked the Council to share in their planning and sponsorship.

4. *Special Visiting Committee.* The officers of the Council, or such other groups as the Executive Committee might choose, are authorized to seek private conferences with as many Southern governors as possible in the next three months. Their discussions will not be confined to race relations, but will include the main problems of social and economic welfare in the South.

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THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA, DECEMBER, 1944

To attain through research and action programs the ideals and practices of equal opportunity for all peoples in the region.

Editorial

The recent annual meeting of the Southern Regional Council marked a forward step in the life of movements designed to make human relations democratic in the South. Paradoxical as it may seem race relations movements seldom have been democratic in their structure and function. In the past they operated in two ways: first, they relied very heavily upon the one-man type of leadership, one person being a spokesman for each race; second, they leaned very heavily upon the wisdom and wishes of a select few whose actions were either supported or repudiated. Today, more so than ever before, the wishes of the many become the foundation stone of action in the field of race relations. As we have implied, this is a very significant index to the changing character of movements in race relations, and if the Southern Regional Council's Member Meeting may be regarded as indicative of any trend at all it does reflect a growing desire on the part of people to face situations frankly, collectively and fearlessly.

The executives of the Council were heartened by the courage and forthrightness with which chronic and acute problems of southern life were introduced. True, SRC members did not possess all of the information, hold to all of the beliefs, decide on every action that would make living utopian, but they did make a light for ways that have been dark. No phase of relations between the races was ignored in discussion. The members realized, however, the mighty potency of words and stultifying effect of fear in furthering or arresting any program they might undertake. Though our emotions were quickened with reports of "incidents" of sex and race, of injustices, of official lethargy and community inactivity, our reason was challenged with programs of correction, amelioration, even the complete undoing of ways that had perpetuated an undemocratic South. We met to find ways of doing something more about and with all of these people, communities and problems. We stuck to our last.

Above all, perhaps, this achievement seems outstanding—we learned to discuss all of our ills without venom and emotional distress; we made new covenants and resolutions, openly arrived at. And though the SRC's diagnosis of the South is not yet complete, the organization's therapy for what is known continues. There is abundant life in the membership of the Southern Regional Council. That gives us hope.

Resolutions—*Continued*

We recommend the creation of a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee to promote the non-discriminatory use of manpower.

3. Education

In the seventeen states and the District of Columbia which require separation of the races in their public school systems, continuing and substantial differences in the public schools for white and Negro children prevail despite requirements of educational statutes, that separate and uniform school facilities be established and maintained. These differences are reflected in the buildings and equipment, in the length of the school day, in the teacher-pupil loads, in the per-pupil expenditure, in the investments in public school property, and in teachers' salaries.

Recognizing the necessity and continuing obligation to establish equality of educational opportunity for all in order to further the establishment of a sound economy in the Southern region, and recognizing the opportunities inherent in the post-war plans for school improvements now developing in communities within these states, we accept the principles that:

1. There should exist and be available for Negro children the same types of educational opportunities as there are for white children.
2. The teacher-pupil ratio in Negro schools should be as low as that in schools for white children.
3. The length of the school day should be the same for the Negro child as it is for the white child.
4. The same types of physical accommodations and facilities in the public schools should exist and be available for Negro children as are available for white children.

We commend these principles for the consideration of all law-abiding citizens, and responsible school officials in Southern communities, and urge, in behalf of the common welfare, that action be taken to make these principles operative in all plans for public school improvements.

4. Homer P. Rainey and the University of Texas

The Southern Region Council wishes to protest the dismissal of Dr. Homer P. Rainey as President of the University of Texas. The Council believes this is a startling infringement of personal and academic freedom, and a severe blow to those Southern persons and agencies working for democratic rights.

The Southern Regional Council believes in Dr. Rainey because of his long and effective participation in progressive movements. It believes in him because of his long and effective participation in progressive movements. It believes in him because of his close association with us in the formation of SRC which he now serves as Vice-President. The Council commends him for the stand he has taken, and applauds those Texas citizens and those students and faculty members at the University of Texas who gave him such unqualified support.

Program—*Continued*

5. *Civil Rights Committees.* From time to time arise cases which the SRC might well handle for the protection of the civil rights of citizens in the region. The central staff cannot undertake to investigate personally all such cases. Therefore, the Council members approved the establishment of Civil Rights Committees in all our thirteen states. Each committee might be composed of five Council members and a legal advisor who may or may not be a member of the Council, and the duty of these Committees would be to advise the Executive Directors and the Executive Committee as to what action the Council should take in cases involving civil rights.

6. *Youth Work.* The Council authorized the taking of steps that would permit youth direct participation in the Council or the sponsoring of some sort of auxiliary or correlated youth division of the Council.

7. *Study of Police Systems.* One of the most urgent needs in the South is reform of police training and administration. Along with its program of promoting improvement wherever it can, the Council authorized the sponsorship of a comprehensive study of Southern police systems in cooperation with one or more universities. An approach of this sort would permit the Council to embark on a program which would not necessarily be tied in with the race question, yet would permit the treatment and analysis of a problem that is closely allied with race tensions.

8. *Study of Segregation and Discrimination.* The Council authorized the drawing of plans for a comprehensive study to be carried on throughout the South in the field of legal discrimination and segregation. It is proposed that ameliorative action be based upon a study of the facts as to the human and economic costs of segregation and discrimination. Such a study should provide useful material for molding public opinion on the question of equal opportunity. This study would be preceded by a conference on the subject of segregation and discrimination.

9. *Primary Test Case.* The Council authorized the Board of Directors to proceed with a legal test of the applicability of the Supreme Court decision in Smith vs Allwright in the State of Georgia if it appears that no such case is already under way.

President Odum's Address

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more specifically we recognized our opportunity and obligation to take over where the Commission on Interracial Cooperation had left off.

If I understood correctly, we thought that it would be a fine thing if we could have for the first year such a united Council devoting its energies to getting organized, providing adequate offices and minimum equipment, and exploring the preliminary ways and means for seeking direction for a continuing Council worthy of the South and the crisis which it faced.

The main thing was to have a Council united on high grounds of both purpose and strategy, having a sound philosophy and plan commensurate with attainable standards of achievement. We didn't care much what was done the first year in so far as what was done was right. In fact we thought that it might be better not to try to do too much until we were ready, knowing full well that our problem was one which had no simple or total solution but many solutions; our questions of dispute and differences of opinions had no single easy answer but many answers. We knew, too, that we had neither the wisdom for the answers nor the strategy for these solutions. But we wanted above all else for the South to try something first-class within the framework of our American democracy and the ideals of Christianity. We wanted to be American as well as Southerner and we wanted to be Christian as well as Church.

And finally, in venturing into what we believed to be the most important and the most difficult of all American problems, we knew that the hazards would be great and that the criticisms would be many and bitter from almost every level of American and southern life. But we held that when these criticisms came, knowing already that they *would* come, we should interpret them all as increasing evidence of the need for all the more singleness of purpose, hard work, and devotion to the task.

And you remember, we said that we would do our level best *not to be afraid*.

Well, we have such a Council. As I see it, the staff has done a great deal more than these minimum assignments and has more than met expectations. So, too, in many ways the criticisms and attacks have been less in number and in bitterness than I had anticipated, in spite of the extraordinary catalogue which I shall presently mention. The Executive Directors have provided for admirable office arrangements with conditions of working relationships hardly dreamed of a few years ago. The young people assisting there have not only worked with standard efficiency but also with a zeal worthy of a crusade. The Executive Directors and Secretary-Treasurer have not only done well their new assignments but have taken over a multitude of left-overs from a long and eventful record of the Commission on Interracial Cooperation. And they have turned out a prodigious amount of hard and important work. In the midst of all this, they have had conflicting demands upon their time; too many things to do, too little time and help to do it with. Yet the net result must surely be one to elicit from us all not only our gratification but our high appreciation for what has been done.

* * *

Our first feeling and reaction, therefore, is very clearly one of gratification for the progress we have made and a new enthusiasm and eagerness to go on now and do the job. Our second feeling and reaction, however, is something quite different. It is one of wide-eyed, perhaps startled, realization of the total realities involved in the catalogue of crises, misunderstandings and criticisms and in the prospect before us there is a new recognition of the hazards facing us.

There is first of all the world situation of war and suffering. With reference to our own Nation, there is mass tragedy in the making and in which there is abounding in all our American families and communities personal tragedy and more to come on such momentous scale as we have ever known. From hazard and sorrow, from personal tragedies and grief, surely we are chastened to a scorn of personal conflicts, trivial quarrels and futile conflict and bickerings and to a determined will to forget self and unimportant details. And maybe we aspire to a national humility adequate to encompass all those irresponsibles who share neither the hard work nor the sorrow of the nation.

And then abroad, the folk conflicts and tragedies are beyond any reasonable comprehension. Here are the noble Greeks again in travail. As if all slaughter and starvation were not enough, there are added now tragedies of civil strife. And the great perennially suffering Polish people; and the little democracies, peace loving and long suffering; the sensitive French and Belgians and the British and the Chinese and the Russians and all that other host of suffering people whose tragedies are a part of our heritage—surely their conflicts and tragedies, their sacrifice and suffering, make ours pale by comparison. Yes, we do have our problems and we set high store on their solution; but in the fellowship of suffering there is challenge to sympathy and patience and understanding.

Back again to our own Country: within the special field of race relations, North and West, a multitude of organizations are working to meet crises. They are differing one with another, conflicting over status and details, issuing ultimatums. From all this the conclusion seems justified that the problem is not only for the South but is among America's first. As instructed, we explored the possibilities of the President of the United States appointing a National Advisory Committee and came to the conclusion that the situation was so complicated that we agreed with "The Chief" that it could not be done to good advantage. The criticisms of the President in his prospective appointments indicated that the net result would be divisive rather than unifying.

Many of the criticisms of the Southern Regional Council have been logical and consistent repetition of the usual charge that the Council lacks courage to face the issues of segregation and that it is committed to the preservation of the Southern *status quo*. So, too, there has grown up a rising tide of bitter criticism of the South whose sweeping total assumes the proportions of a sort of symphony whose crescendo repeats the recurring motif "I hate the South." It is easily conceivable that in specific cases such a feeling would be inevitable, as in the case of Negro youth, but even if it were justifiable, I can conceive of few more important American tasks than so planning together as to eliminate this poison in our American system.

There have been currents more grievous than mere bitterness and criticisms. Some of the efforts to set race against race, to make race conflict the basis for achieving special ends and the engendering of bitterness for bitterness sake come nigh unto treason and some efforts have been treasonable in effect. So wide and so bitter have been these criticisms and so unequal the conditions of American life, that it seems clear that the most important domestic problems of post war planning must surely center around the regional quality and balance of America.

There are also serious problems of definition and of strategy. With reference to the prevailing tendency to advocate Federal coercion for the South in matters of race segregation as being a necessary tenet of American democracy, one point needs to be recognized. The essence of American democracy has always specified the consent of the governed as fundamental in both philosophy and the administration. It follows, therefore, that since the majority of southern people will not give their consent, the only possible way of achieving coercive revision would be through pure fascism or some other type of totalitarian government, insofar as this coercion is extended to the regions where overwhelming majorities will not give their consent. Whatever else it might be, it couldn't be democracy in the way of governmental administration. And so powerful conflicting forces are gaining momentum that needs to be channeled into ways of council more than conflict.

* * *

Now coming on to the South, the hazards and criticism of the Council and its work; the realities and obstacles to be faced are scarcely less sobering; perhaps they are probably more profound and far-reaching. There have been criticisms of the Council of many sorts within and without its own set-up. Some of these criticisms you have read and you have read the illuminating replies by Hancock, Wesley, Johnson and others. Many of the criticisms have clearly ignored facts; many have reflected personal sensitiveness

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not justified in so important work. There have been criticisms of personalities and arrangements as well as of principles and practices. Yet all of this, in addition to affording measures of reality, is a normal part of the democratic process and is symbolic also of the frustration and aggression expected in times that are abnormal. Nevertheless, the test of an abiding organization doing its job in a big way must somehow be in the measure of its unity and its capacity to work together.

It has been stated both North and South that the Council was nurtured in noble words that meant nothing. Yet the reading of our resolutions and of those others stated so clearly at Durham must be convincing that the words are both specific and meaningful. To me there is meaning in the words, "a new declaration of American principles," "a new dedication to our task;" or the positive phrase "this means more specifically as bearing upon the burden of our present counseling that the Negro in the United States and in every region is entitled to and should have every guarantee of equal opportunities that every other citizen of the United States has within the framework of the American democratic system of government." All these mean to me exactly what they say. And when we said, "We dedicate ourselves unswervingly to the successful achievement of this task," I translate that to be good English saying something very definite.

The greatest reality which we face, however, is in the total mass criticism and honest fear of both the white South and the Negro leadership. On the one hand there is the sincere fear that the Council aims to do something contrary to the southern way of life as a living part of American democracy. On the other, there is fear that nothing will be done. This is the main series of criticisms that we face and we must respect it and study it. We must find out, if we plan to have an all-regional Southern Council, how many of the people of what sort will go along with us in what ways; and having found that out we must decide which is the way of leadership and which is the way of followship and determine our course accordingly.

The strategy with which we approach our task involves fundamental issues. One of these is whether the South can work increasingly well in the total integration of our national democracy with the rest of the nation. To state the problem vividly, is the South willing to work with a President or a Vice President of the United States in our Council? Or, are we so southern and they so un-American that there is no resolving of differences in practical workable ways of doing things? And equally can the rest of the nation rise to the statures of cooperation with and face the realities of the southern regional problems which are "American" if they are anything? These are profound questions which bring us back to the fundamentals of American democracy, greater than local issues, emphasizing the fact that this thing of southern regional development and the regional balance of the nation is a supreme task.

All this challenges again the Negro to a sort of superhuman wisdom and a superlative strategy through which he can mould a great transitional period in terms of and in the framework of American democracy and can cooperate with the white South and the rest of the nation in doing the most and the best that can be done. It must be clear that this is a noble task but that there is no other way by which the attainment of mastery is possible.

* * *

This, then, is my second reaction. Our third level of sensing the situation is in terms of what to do next and how to do it. They all tell us that we must face the issue of segregation frankly. That is, the several militant groups insist that we must declare ourselves on what they assume to be the one definitive issue. For instance, the aggressively active American intellectuals and agitators, commonly called "The North", continuously push for an exact declaration, specifically bearing upon the philosophy, not the practice, of segregation. So, also, the Negro leadership of the Nation can bring itself to negotiate on no common ground that does not assume the elimination of legal segregation in America and that the very pattern of segregation, even if tenable, by its very definition, negates the whole guarantee of *equal* rights and accommodations. There are other reasons from some sources, but these are not basic to our planning now.

On the other hand, the white South insists upon a straightforward declaration with reference to segregation, also with two basic assumptions. One is that segregation is here to stay, is the only acceptable economy for the South, and cannot be eliminated in any way. Another is that it is time to go to work in what *can* be done—and quit fighting over what can't be done. Within this framework, then, it is urged that the South work straightforward and forthright to bring about more and more actual equality and services guaranteed under the law. Many southern Negroes are on record as being willing to join in such a declaration.

Now we know these demands are real and that we must face both the issues and the situations which give rise to all these assumptions. Yet there are ways and ways of taking important steps in which crisis and emergency are everywhere apparent. There is needed wisdom and maturity, strategy and honesty, science and morality, all pooled together worthy of the America which we build.

There are many evidences to indicate that we do not now have the wisdom or the maturity adequate for the task; that we have not worked long enough on a master strategy and a forthright intellectual honesty; and that we are not prepared to balance the scientific societal facts with the emotional phases or the moral issues involved. It is one thing to agree to work hard and long, faithfully and honestly, within the framework of an existing, realistic order of legal segregation to bring about better and better results, to insist on full equality before the law and in economic opportunity, and above all to leave nothing undone to prevent conflict and tragedy by devotion to this high ideal of doing what we can do. It is something different, however, to go on record as approving the principles and philosophy, the practice and pattern of legal segregation as embodied in the southern way of life. An individual may well rightly so go on record; many individuals may agree; but for an organization of leaders seeking genuine progress, having this field of race relations as one of its major areas of activity and concern, to so subscribe itself would be providing no leadership at all.

What I am suggesting, therefore, is that this strategy of working out on a mature basis the essentials of the Council's platform and program be made the special order of business for one of the special strategy conferences recommended by the Executive Directors. And, for this meeting today we have a day filled to overflowing with a two-fold task. One is to receive the report of our directors and of the committees that have been at work; to act upon their recommendations and to follow up with suggestions, discussions and encouragement. The other, then, in the afternoon, following this rich experience of participating in the first annual meeting's reports, is to open wide the doors of discussion and suggestion, and to provide then specific time and procedures for the formulation of continuing specific formulae and strategy of work.

Life is rich here and full of opportunity and hazard. Yes, we know that practically everything that everybody says is true in all the complicated maze of our interwoven culture and civilization. Yet always we are trying to ascertain what else is true and what is the relation of each truth to each other truth and to the whole. We are always trying to remember that today is not tomorrow and that we have covenanted together to so meet crisis as to let it make us do something better than we would have done without the crisis. Well, we have the crisis; what to do and how to do it, that is our problem. And there is no contradiction in the poet's exhortation "to seek, to find, to strive and not to yield."

Negro Servicemen

A recent survey by the Associated Negro Press discloses that there were 871,010 Negroes in the armed services of the United States as of October 31, 1944. Of this number 701,678 were in the Army and 169,332 in the Navy. The Army figures showed 5,804 commissioned officers; 49,483 in the Infantry; 36,302 in the Coast and Field Artillery; 867 Cavalry; 133,180 Engineers, and 408,160 in other branches. The Navy personnel included 17 officers and 142,628 enlisted; the Marines 15,771 enlisted; the Coast Guard 4 officers and 3,675 enlisted.

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